SO, MY FOOLISH SERVANT...
...I ASK THEE NOW.
I BEAR THE MIGHT OF THE GODS IN MY BREAST.
ART THOU WILLING TO BE CURSED?

nod

I CAN SEE IT IN THINE EYES
THEN SPEAK NO WORDS—
—BUT SHOW ME THY RESOLVE

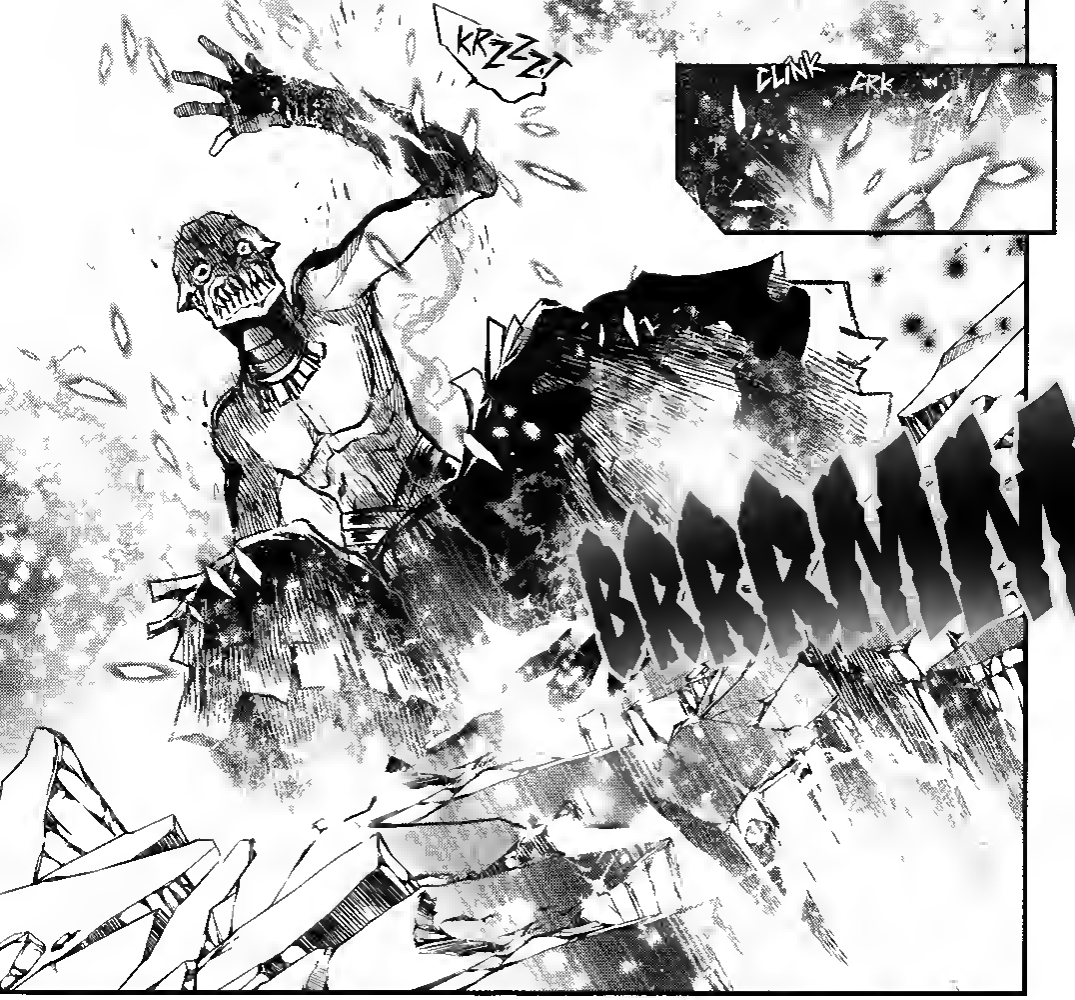
HAH.../
A...
AAAH!
TAKE MY SWEET NECTAR...
...AND DRINK DEEPLY!

BA-THUD
BA-THUD
KH...
KHHK!
KHAAAH!
KZTZT
KZTZT
KRRR

GRAAAAAA

THK
THK
THK
KUH

SHINNN
8
KRAAAAA!!!
KRAAAAA!!!


KRZZZT
CLINK
CRK
BRRRMM

THUD
LEAP

ZZZTT
KRAK
KRZZZ

I THINK IT'S PURSUING THE GHOUL, MA'AM.
LADY DAKRIS UP THERE!
IS THAT THE CREATURE FROM THE REPORT?
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT.
BUT THE THING ABOUT BURGESS...
HE CAN CHANGE SHAPE AT WILL

THAT SKILL ALONE MAKES HIM ONE OF THE BEST KILLERS ON THE MARKET
LOSE TRACK OF HIM FOR EVEN A SECOND, AND YOU WON'T FIND HIM AGAIN
BURGESS' PLAN IS NO DOUBT TO DISAPPEAR IN THE CROWD.

THUK

CRRRACK
?!
WHAT'S IT DOING?!

WHOOM
...?!
OH, NO...
SSSHH

ALL THESE PEOPLE...
IT'S GOING TO BE A MASSACRE!
THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN SEE THE GHOUL FROM THERE!
KH!
flash

CRACKLE
tiny
plink
?!
shine
SSSSHH
SSSSSSSS

GHAAA!!
THUK
THUD
TOK
THOK
THOK
THUK
THOK

HRRH...
HRAAH...
TOF
TOF
TOF
shuffle
TOF
SSSSSS

KHOOM
...W...
THIS...
IS...

BRRRMMMMM

COME ON!
HE'S PROBABLY GOING TO THE ADAARI PRINCESS!
THAT WAS INCREDI-BLE!

LEAP

GREY...
THOU HAST PROTECTED SAKURA AND MYSELF...
...MORE TIMES THAN I CAN REMEMBER
FOR THAT, WE ARE BOTH GRATEFUL BEYOND WORDS
I'M... ...SURPRISED
YOU KNOW
...YOU DON'T HAVE TO THANK ME
step
GREY!
YOU... DID IT

SAKURA ?
BROTHER
I'M SORRY
I SAID SOME THINGS
AND I WAS TOO HARD ON YOU
BUT I—
YOUR KIND HEART IS A TREASURE
I WANT YOU TO KNOW
SAKURA

WANTING TO DO GOOD IS WHO YOU ARE, I KNOW...
BUT RIGHT NOW, SAKURA...
...KINDNESS IS A LUXURY

GRIP

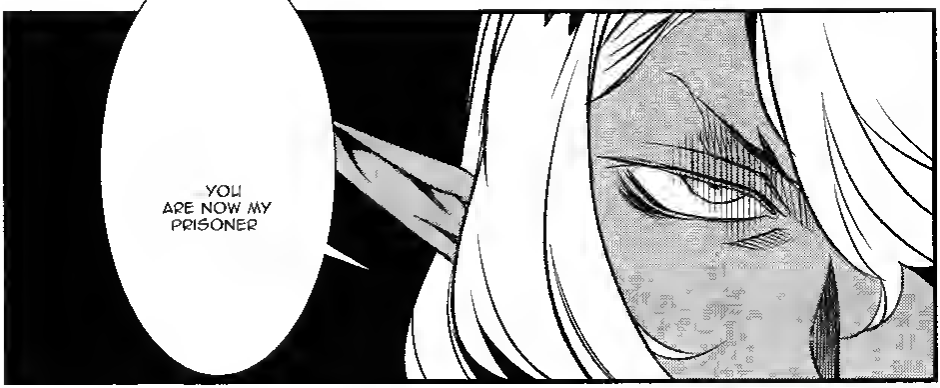
SO LISTEN TO ME NOW BOTH OF YOU
YOUR GOOD HEARTS WILL LEAD YOU INTO DANGER
IF YOU LET THEM GUIDE YOU IN EVERY LITTLE THING

...YOU WILL NOT SURVIVE THE PLACES THEY'LL TAKE YOU.
BEFORE YOU CAN DO GOOD...
...FIRST, YOU MUST BECOME STRONG.

WE WILL!
GREY, WE WILL BECOME STRONGER!
I SWEAR!

I KNOW, KAI
I KNOW...
YOU WILL
GREY!
BROTHER, NO...!

SUCH A SAD END TO SUCH A BRAVE MAN
GREY ENFIELD...
step
YOU'RE A DHALAN!?
YOU...?!
BY THE ORDER OF BRED REGAN, GENERAL-GOVERNOR OF DATRA, TERRITORY OF THE DHALAN EMPIRE...
AND YOU'RE THE PRINCESS OF ADAAR
SAKURA SHAKUNTIRA ADONIERA
CLACK
CLACK


YOU ARE NOW MY PRISONER

stumble
THERE'S NO WAY I'LL LET YOU—
NO!

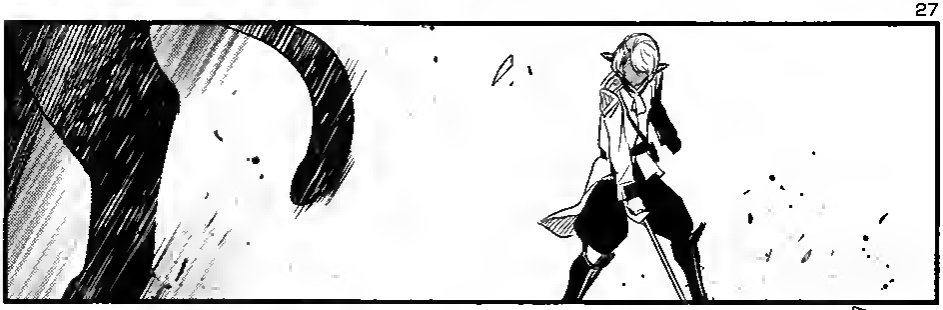
KAI?!
GRIP
!!
THUD

I SEE
WHEN YOU'RE UNDER THE DHARANI CURSE...
...YOU GAIN STRENGTHS AND POWERS THAT ARE, QUITE FRANKLY, TERRIFYING

BUT SOON AS THE CURSE IS LIFTED...
YOU'RE EVEN LESS THAN NORMAL
tap tap

KAI!!
slip
YOUR PART IN THIS PLAY IS OVER...
...SO DIE!

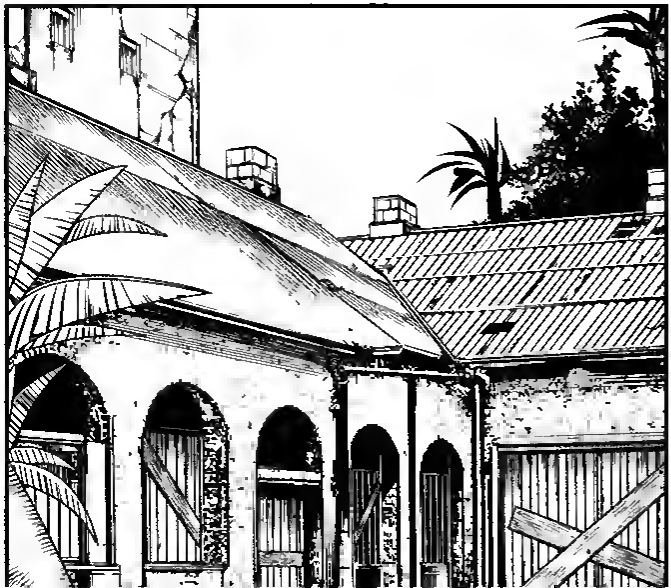
YANK



A LEOPARD?!
NO!
NO, THAT'S A CELIAN-THROPE!

BLAM BAM
FIRE!
thump
swing

BAM
THOK
SPAK
KRAK



flop
29
SHEESH!
hmph!
I WANTED TO SAVE THE PRIN-CESS
frssh

I'VE ABANDONED THAT PART OF MY DUTY.
SHAKUN-TIIRA.
NO, I'VE...
HUH?
WILT THOU NOT RETURN...
...TO THE MORTAL WORLD?

AND YET THAT POWER...
I DON'T WANT THAT EVER AGAIN
I AM FLEEING YOUR CURSE.
TO HAVE THE POWER OF A GOD--
SHAKUNTIIRA?!
AND WHO'S THE GUY?
I SEE
THOU ART FLEEING FROM ME--

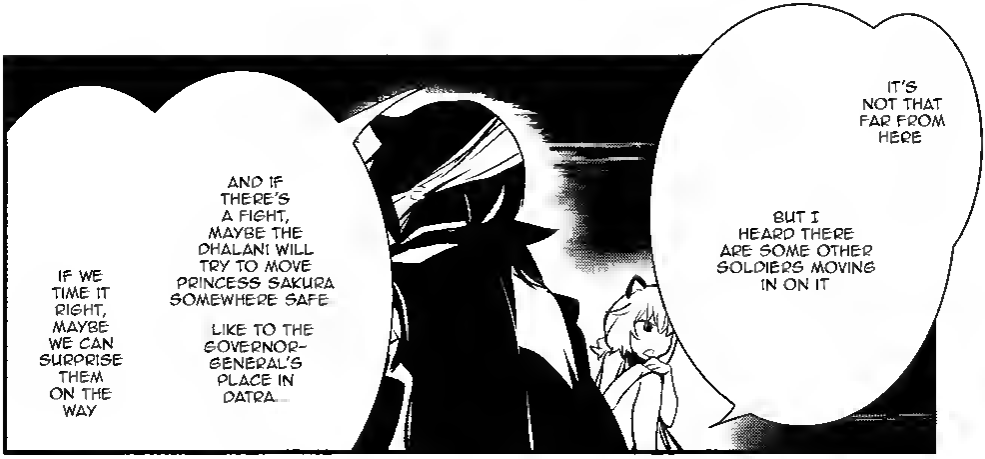
...IS WHAT GIVES THEE THE STRENGTH TO BRING DOWN THY ENEMIES
IT IS THY FATE TO MAKE USE OF IT
...AND THOU CANNOT FLEE FROM FATE
IT WILL HUNT AND TORMENT THEE
OR AS LONG AS THOU ART STILL ALIVE
I KNOW SHAKUN-TIIRA
I KNOW IT ALL TOO WELL
THEN DRINK OF ME ONCE MORE, O KING OF MEN..
...AND MAY THOU BE CURSED FOREVER!

@
FINALLY AWAKE, HUH?
OH, UM...
AREN'T YOU THE GIRL SAKURA HELPED ?
I'M NIA
NIA NIDIA
I'M KAI
WELL THEN, KAI...
FIRST THINGS FIRST
EAT

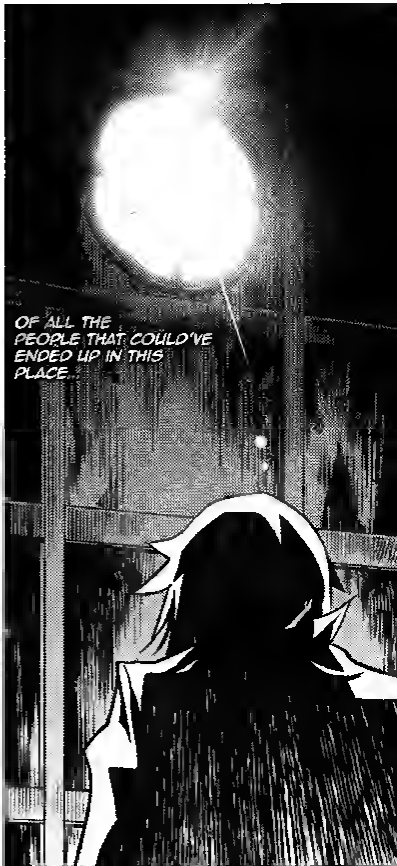
CALM DOWN, IT'S JUST WILDFLOWER RICE...
...WITH SOME FISH I FOUND
WHOA, DISH ISH GWEAT!
YEAH?
WELL, IT TASTES AMAZING, NIA!

YEAH
SO SAKURA WAS CAPTURED...
I THINK THEY TOOK HER TO THE OHALANI IMPERIAL FORTRESS HERE IN SURIYAH

GLAD TO HEAR IT...
...'CAUSE THERE'S MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR SECONDS
smack
chomp


IT'S NOT THAT FAR FROM HERE
BUT I HEARD THERE ARE SOME OTHER SOLDIERS MOVING IN ON IT
AND IF THERE'S A FIGHT, MAYBE THE DHALANI WILL TRY TO MOVE PRINCESS SAKURA SOMEWHERE SAFE
LIKE TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S PLACE IN DATRA...
IF WE TIME IT RIGHT, MAYBE WE CAN SURPRISE THEM ON THE WAY

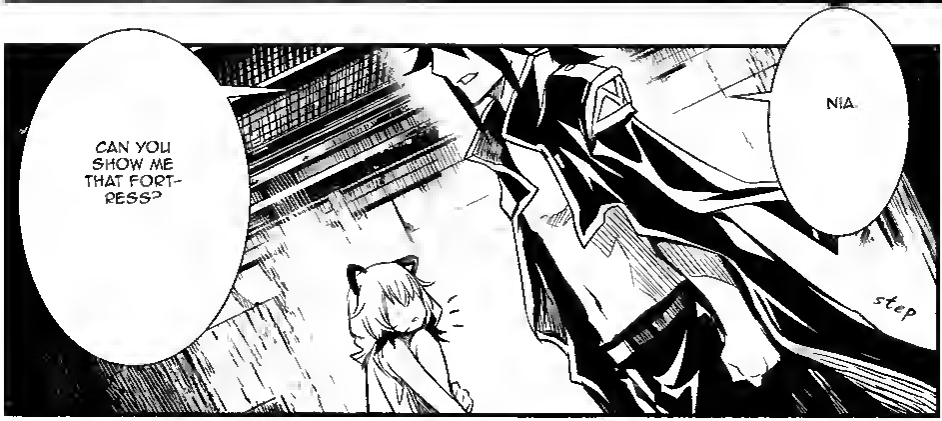
...HOW COME A USELESS NOBODY LIKE ME WAS CHOSEN?


OF ALL THE PEOPLE THAT COULD'VE ENDED UP IN THIS PLACE...

I KEEP ASKING THAT QUESTION...
...BUT I'M STARTING TO THINK I'LL NEVER KNOW THE ANSWER.

BUT THERE IS ONE THING I DO KNOW...
I KNOW I MADE A PROMISE TO A FRIEND...

KAI
SAKURA
HELP HER!
tug
I WILL BECOME STRONGER!

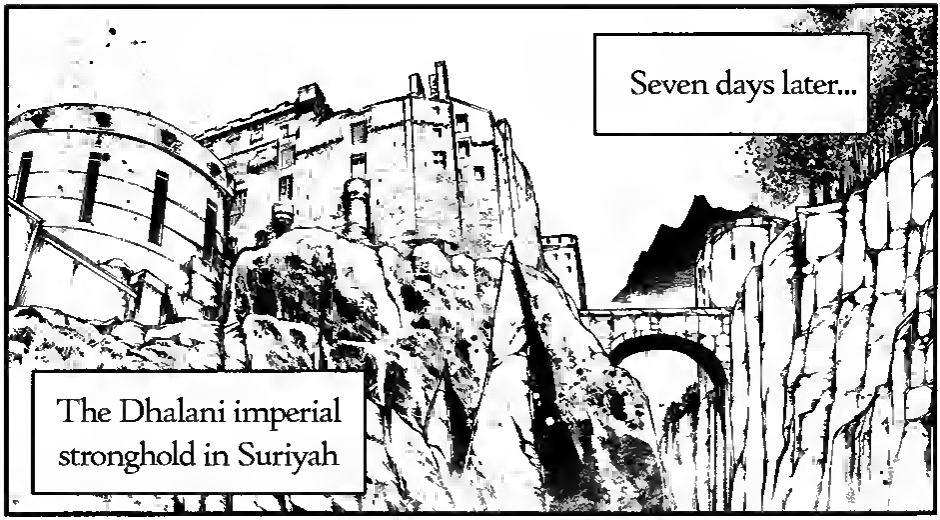

CAN YOU SHOW ME THAT FORTRESS?
NIA
step

I PROMISED SOMEONE...
I SWORE I WOULD PROTECT HER.
THE PRINCESS...
SAKURA...

SERIOUSLY?
I MEAN, DHALANI SOLDIERS ARE PRETTY TOUGH...
STILL...
I HAVE TO DO THIS
SO I'M BEGGING YOU!
clasp
PLEASE, NIA!
HELP ME!

WHY SHOULD I HELP YOU?!
I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOU!
BUT...
...SINCE IT'S FOR PRINCESS SAKURA...
...I GUESS MAYBE I CAN HELP...
...MAYBE!

THANK YOU, NIA.
I'M A COMPLETE STRANGER HERE.
I NEED TO LEARN EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE, THIS WORLD
I NEED YOU TO TELL ME ABOUT THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.
THE TECHNOLOGY YOU HAVE HERE.
ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF!
38
I'LL START LEARNING.
I'LL START PLANNING.
AND ABOVE ALL ELSE, I'LL STOP RUNNING.
BECAUSE I AM HERE NOW.
I AM IN THIS WORLD
I FINALLY ACCEPT THAT.
AND THIS IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO START TO FIGHT.


Seven days later...
The Dhalani imperial stronghold in Suriyah

THEY'RE STILL CAUTIOUS

YOU'RE *SERIOUS* ABOUT THIS, BOSS?
I MEAN, SENDING EVEN MORE OF US OVER THERE WON'T CHANGE ANYTHING...
OTHER THAN MAKING *US* JUST AS DEAD AS THE ONES THAT WENT BEFORE

NOTHING'S IMPOSSIBLE!
RIGHT, I ALMOST FORGOT...
YOU DON'T LIKE ME QUESTIONING OUR SUPERIORS, YOU BEING ALL NOBLE AND ALL...
SPEAKING OF WHICH, I'VE BEEN WONDERING...
WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU DO TO END UP HERE IN THE BUSHES WITH US LOW-BORNS...
...LIEUTENANT LIGIA KRATZ?

WE'LL DO AS WE WERE COMMANDED
YEAH, YEAH...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S IMPOSSIBLE...

STOP TALKING
WE'RE GOING BACK.
YEAH, YEAH.

laughter
chatter

HEY NOW, SHE MAY BE USELESS, BUT THOSE TITS O' HERS I'LL FOLLOW WHEREVER THEY LEAD!
—AND NOT ONLY IS OUR NEW LEADER A WOMAN, SHE'S A DAMN ROOKIE!
...BUT THIS AIN'T NEAR ENOUGH!
I MEAN—
I HEARD THE PAY WAS GOOD HERE...
LOOK AT THIS!
LOOK!
WHAT THE...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
GHAA HAH HAH HAH HAH HAH

I SPECIFICALLY ORDERED YOU TO PREPARE FOR TOMORROW'S ENGAGEMENT!
EH?
WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE?!
DRINKIN', BOSS!

BUT—
THEY KNOW BY THIS TIME TOMORROW, MOST OF THEM WILL BE COLD IN THE GROUND NEXT TO THE OTHERS
IN THEIR MINDS, THEY'VE ALREADY LOST
NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO, BOSS
'S HARD WORK, TO BE HONEST, BUT SHOMEONE'S GOTTA DO IT, AM I RIGHT?!
AYE, AN' THAT WE ARE!
WE'RE DRINKIN'!
42
I SAID LET ME GO!
I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY!
squirm
COMMANDER!
rustle
MA'AM, WE FOUND SOMEONE SNEAKING AROUND THE CAMP!

flap
SHE SPEAKS THE TRUTH
RELEASE HER, PLEASE.
43
SHE'S MY COMPANION
I AM MAJOR GREY ENFIELD.
AND YOU ARE...?

In the tomes that chronicle the rise of Albion...

...one man stands tall as its proudest, fiercest champion.

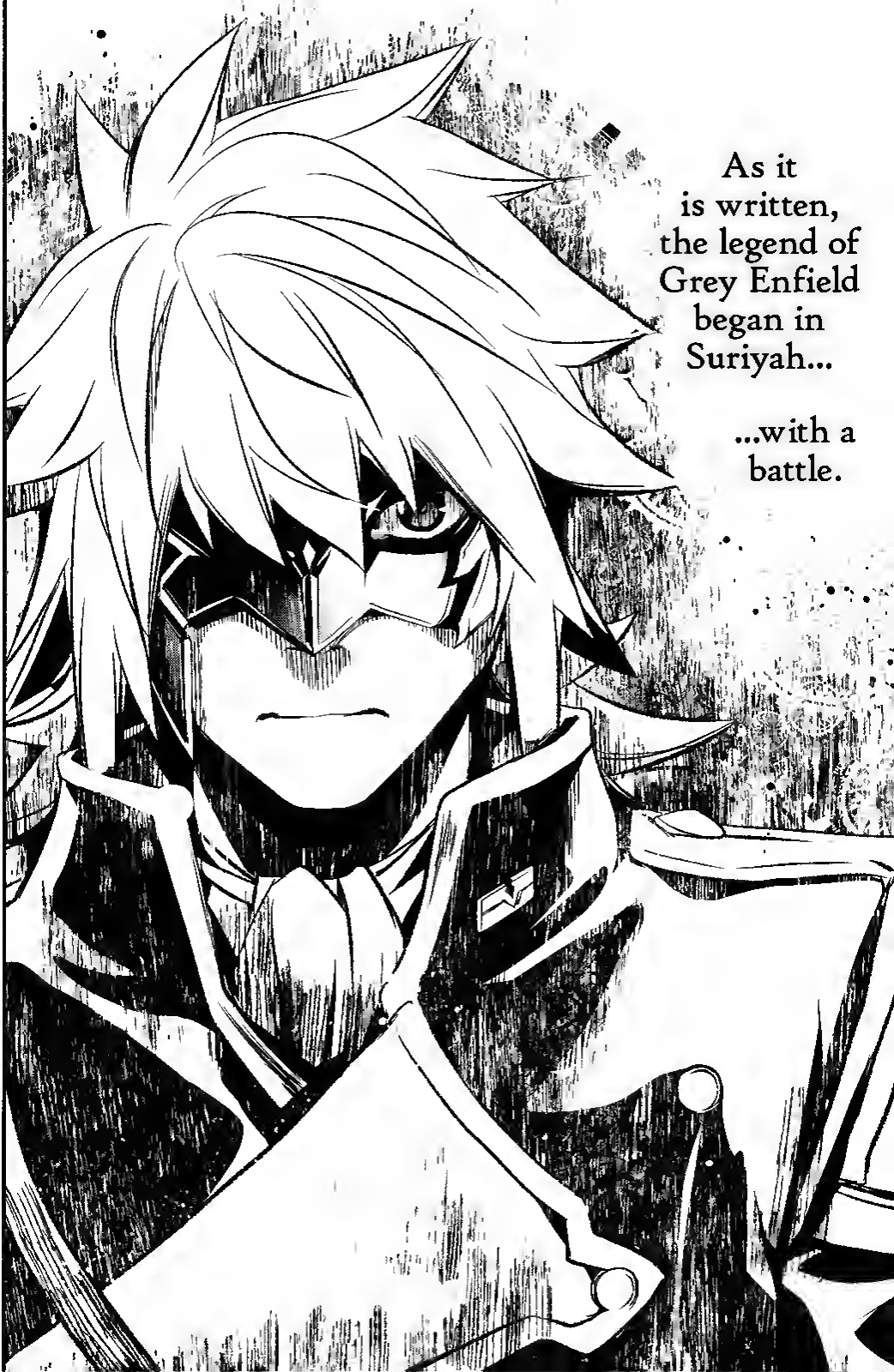
His name was Grey Enfield.

The hero who came to be known as Grey the Cursed...

...and the Dharani War-God.

The story of Grey's life was told by his oldest friend, a man of whom there is no surviving record...

...save that he only called himself "Kai", and that he always wore a mask to hide his scarred face.


As it is written, the legend of Grey Enfield began in Suriyah...
...with a battle.

神咒のネクタール

SHINJU NO NECTAR
NECTAR OF DHARANI

NEXT:
CHAPTER 5

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